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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001604

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: INFORMAL COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES PETITION SEEKS  
TIMELINE FOR U.S. WITHDRAWAL

Classified by PolCouns Margaret Scobey, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Post obtained a copy of a petition signed by a majority of Iraq's Council of Representative (CoR) members calling for a timeline for the withdrawal of MNF troops, which has been the object of much speculation (translation in para 7). The Sadr Bloc took the lead on rounding up 144 signatures, many of which are tempered with "caveats" noted next to the signature -- over 50 citing stronger Iraqi security forces as a prerequisite to MNF withdrawal. The petition is non-binding and is not a draft law, although the Sadrists would like to see a law defining a timeline for troop withdrawal to answer "the desire of a majority of CoR members" (while insisting that the GoI consult the CoR on decisions related to the MNF presence). Para 8 notes the diversity of individuals putting their names on the petition. End summary.

¶2. (C) A petition signed by 144 CoR members calls for a timeline for the withdrawal of multinational forces. The measure was spearheaded by the CoR's Sadrist Bloc, which garnered signatures of its close allies and conditional endorsement from a broader cross-section of CoR members. We continue to hear some members (Kurdish and SCIRI, for example) adamantly deny that they or their parties signed the document, which nonetheless has names from a number of key political blocs collected in late April and early May.

¶3. (C) While it is not a draft law, was not put to a vote, and is opposed by many CoR members, the petition does have signatures from over half of the 275 members and was transmitted to the CoR Speaker on May 8 with a Sadrist call for the drafting of legislation setting out a withdrawal timeline. (See para 6 for translation of cover letter, para 7 for translation of petition.) Speaker Mashadani told PolCouns May 13 that he could not simply disregard a statement signed by a majority of members, although he was skeptical that the petition would lead to anything more than a non-binding resolution which he said should tie MNF withdrawal to the readiness of Iraqi forces to assume the security mission -- a linkage clearly on the minds of many of the signatories to the petition.

¶4. (C) When the petition came up during the second meeting of the political committee of the SCIRI strategic dialogue (septel), SCIRI CoR member Jalal al-Din al-Saghir adamantly denied that any SCIRI or Badr members signed the petition. Yet he noted that there was a growing feeling in the CoR that it should become involved in the question of the presence of coalition forces, and he claimed that "the provocations" of coalition forces were causing heightened sensitivity. "We need your help in reducing the feeling on the street that many detentions are not justified," al-Saghir continued. Vice President Abdel Mehdi noted SCIRI's position, as expressed in its recent platform (BAGHDAD 1587), that the presence of the coalition forces was temporary and that the

training of Iraqi security forces needed to be accelerated. He said it would take further work with other groups in the CoR to develop the correct perspective on the issues raised by the petition.

¶5. (C) Comment: We do not sense a danger of the petition evolving into draft legislation in the near term, although pressure for the establishment of a withdrawal timeline will not subside among Sadr supporters in particular, who have crafted the petition in such a way that it gained at least the tacit endorsement of a broad cross-section of CoR parties. The Sadrist have flexed their creative muscle and again exhibited their penchant for grabbing press headlines -- keeping the withdrawal issue under the lights. End comment.

¶6. (SBU) Informal translation of cover letter to CoR Speaker. Begin text:

(letterhead of Sadr Bloc, Council of Representatives, Republic of Iraq)

To the Honorable CoR Speaker

Re: Law on Timeline for Withdrawal of Occupation Forces

Greetings

The respected Speakers Council previously decided to form a committee comprised of the committees (Legal, Foreign Relations, and Security / Defense) to present a draft law on a timeline for the withdrawal of occupation forces (multinational) from Iraq, to correspond with the approach of reconsideration by the Security Council according to UNSCR 1723 of the continued presence (or not) of the above-named forces and it is the desire of the majority of CoR members to

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resolve this situation according to the attached signed request. We therefore request to:

a -- set a timeline to submit a draft law prior to reconsideration by the UNSC;  
b -- advise the GoI not to extend (the forces' presence) without reference to the CoR.

With appreciation.

Attachment: Request with signatures of majority of CoR members

Nasser al-Rubaie  
Head of Sadr Bloc in CoR  
May 8, 2007

¶7. (SBU) Informal translation of petition. Begin text:

To: Iraqi CoR Speakers Council / GoI / UN SecGen / Members of UNSC / Arab League SecGen / OIC President / EU Presidency  
-- with appreciation.

Re: Timeline for Withdrawal of Occupation (multinational) Forces from Iraq

Due to the approaching UNSC review of the presence of occupation (multinational) forces in Iraq on 15 June 2007 and due to the isolation of the GoI on all previous occasions when the presence of occupation forces was extended and due to constitutional violations (inherent) in the GoI request to the UNSC to extend the presence of occupation (multinational) forces without consultation with the CoR and due to the fact that the CoR represents the Iraqi people and has the right to ratify international treaties -- including UNSCRs -- and respecting the desire of the Iraqi people who demonstrate in request of the departure of occupation forces or a timeline for their withdrawal, we, the undersigned members of the Iraqi CoR of the current term, request (at a minimum) to set

a timeline for the withdrawal of occupation (multinational) forces from our beloved Iraq.

¶8. (C) The statement is followed by a list of 144 members with name (handwritten), signature, and comments (many of which condition support on the building of capable Iraqi security forces). While difficult to read, following are a few observations from the 144 signatures:

- about 75 are UIA (Shia coalition which totals 113 seats);
- at least 27 of the above 75 are Sadr Movement (total 28 seats);
- at least 11 are Fadhila Party (previously allied with UIA, total 15 seats);
- over 20 appear to be Tawafuq (Sunni alliance with 44 seats), many of these from IIP;
- Kurdish group is underrepresented, with five (of well over 50 seats);
- about 12 appear to be from Ayad Allawi's Iraqi National List (of 25 seats);
- over 50 of the comments caveat support on "building Iraqi forces" to provide security and a few others state that MNF withdrawal should depend on the security situation;
- about a dozen call for withdrawal immediately (mostly Sadr Movement); and
- a handful call for the GoI to consult with the CoR on related decisions.

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